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The School in the Barn

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IT IS always the most interesting thing in the world to study the lives of people, any people, during that period when their inward destiny is beginning to assert itself. Some come very early to the knowledge of what nature designed them to be, some not until later and after various trials of different sorts. Very few of the attempts, however, are really blind and unproductive, for long after it can almost always be seen that surely, though deviously, the experiments all moved to a definite end. Certain people wait until their destiny finds them out; others go to seek it. Louisa Alcott, with enterprise that was completely characteristic, was looking for hers when, at the age of sixteen, she opened her little school in the Concord barn.

Her father, Bronson Alcott, strange, vague, cheerful gentleman had theories on education that were as progressive as they were valuable. He was not able, within his own lifetime, to make very great headway against the established rule of some very stiff-necked pedagogic generations. He was, according to my personal belief, somewhat lacking in the practical gifts

which a teacher needs to make the most of children in the mass, of children of average capacity; and thus he failed to be recognized in his own time as a very great educator. Such he undoubtedly was. With his own children he had exactly the proper material for carrying his theories into effect. He taught his four daughters in his own fashion, and had given Louisa all the training she had ever had when she set bravely to work to teach on her own account. It might be that she was not meant to be a teacher, but at least she was going to discover whether she was or not.

She brought to teaching a great many of the essential qualifications, but yet did not possess them all. She had the conception of what a teacher should try to do for those young minds so trustfully put into her keeping. That she got from her father, received in the shape of magnificent but somewhat visionary ideas. With her briskly practical mind, she translated much of his theoretical knowledge into a working system for instructing and interesting young persons, even those whose minds were easily diverted by seeing a butterfly pass the window or watching a phoebe bird constructing its nest against the wall. She was one of the first to see, as her father saw so clearly, that such things were

*Editor's Note: Cornelia Meigs is the author of a number of distinguished books for children, among them *The Kingdom of the Winding Road*, *The Steadfast Princess* (Drama League prize play), *The Pool of Stars*, and *Rain on the Roof*.

not distractions, but the very basis of real education.

She brought, also, to her work a warmth of spirit, a vital, living interest in people, small people and larger ones. She was painstaking and thorough in everything that she did and was unwilling to turn back from an undertaking until she had convinced herself that she could master it. She mastered teaching perhaps; but it never mastered her. Although she taught her pupils some invaluable things before she was done with them, she never came to love teaching, as a real instructor must love it, to achieve that inner satisfaction which is the only real success.

She was impatient by nature, restless and impetuous, traits which do not go hand in hand with constructive pedagogy. Very probably she was much irked by the necessity of devoting time and effort to school room discipline which could so well be used on better and happier phases of education, could in theory, but cannot be in actual practice. The thing which makes the venture memorable is that it was a potential genius who sat behind the teacher's desk and that it was true here as it is in every school room, that at the end of the day it was the instructor and not the small pinafores pupils who had learned the most.

They got a great deal from her, those young persons who sat in rows in the sunshine below the big barn windows. Amongst the group was little Ellen Emerson, daughter of Ralph Waldo Emerson, the devoted friend of Bronson Alcott and all of Bronson's family. With the sure judgment for which this gentle, deeply wise man will always be known, Emerson had sent his daughter to be taught, not by Bronson, whom he loved and revered, but by Louisa. The girl knew far less than her father, but she was much nearer, in heart and spirit and understanding, to that young, inquiring mind. She and Ellen were fast friends. It was for the little girl's amusement that she wrote down, one day, a brief flower fable which was destined to be Louisa Alcott's first published story.

Here came to study, also, very young Mary Wheeler, whose family lived in Concord. She was a grave little girl, tall for her age and full of indomitable determination. Many years later she was to found a school of her own and to establish it so successfully that it has continued to grow and operate for many years, now, since her death. In its scheme of being, certain precepts have always been conspicuous, the idea that beauty is a necessity to complete living, that there is a spiritual responsibility in each individual for his own particular talent and ability. Those spiritual tenets were part of Bronson Alcott's progressive theory, and came first to Mary Wheeler through her brief connection with Louisa's school. Miss Wheeler, in her own school, tried, very early in the history of education, those kindergarten methods which are now an established basis for modern education, tried also the new system of reading by comprehensive glances instead of the laborious spelling out of one word at a time. In these matters Bronson Alcott was a disciple of Pestalozzi and Froebel, and through him and through Louisa, Mary Wheeler became a follower of that school of education also. Many other schools today may have similar connection with Louisa or with her spiritually creative father. This is merely one instance where the influences can be traced at a glance.

The school in the barn was followed by various less organized adventures in pedagogy whereby Louisa carried forward what she had taught there and what she had learned. She tutored a little invalid girl, substituted for her sister Anna in instructing a large class, and had finally a small circle of her own in Boston which she taught privately and in so informal a manner that it could scarcely be called a school.

No one as generous as was Louisa in friendship, in interest, in enthusiasm and good spirits, could fail to offer her pupils anything less than a rich reward for seeking her out. But at a time when teaching was sternly bound by rules and systems,

rebellion was bound to rise up in a free-thinking mind such as was hers, endowed with rare gifts and knowledge granted her through the far-seeing vision of her father. There were dry methods to combat and long hours and the utter lack of real appreciation which was the inexorable and expected lot of teachers of that day. She knew, suddenly, that she would never learn to have patience with all of these things; she left teaching and plunged into the career of literature whither her adventurous spirit was urging her.

What she taught the children is something which, at this distance of time, we cannot well calculate. But what they taught her is more easy to reckon. Neither writing in general, nor writing for young readers can be wholly guided by any set of rules or instructions. Nothing is of much avail except perhaps some few words of advice. For this special creative work, the best counsel might perhaps be—

"If you wish to write for children, contrive, if you can, to teach them for some space of time."

Every true teacher knows that the real reward for the laborious hours of instruction is the contact with young minds, the sure knowledge gained of what they can accept and what they cannot, of what they love and what they reject. There was no study of educational psychology in Louisa's day, except such as was in vague formation in rare minds like Bronson Alcott's. But experience could teach, from day to day, what science had not yet analyzed. Louisa had built up, quite without knowing it, a very sure basis of unshakable knowledge when, after various adventurings in literature, she sat down to

write the first of her books for young people.

Middleton Murray, in his essay on Dickens, has spoken of "this curious trick of immortality." What makes a book immortal? Do we ever quite know? Can we compare one piece of work with another, both of our own time, and say, confidently, which will continue and which will not? How many masterpieces have been lauded to the skies as "something bound to live," and yet have been forgotten within a few years, while some apparently lesser effort has slowly but surely pressed forward to stand in the place of books which time cannot destroy. If being whole-heartedly loved by three generations is any augury of immortality, we may well put down *LITTLE WOMEN* as one of the pieces of work which will enrich our literature for a long time to come. The fact of its being written for young people may be one reason why it is difficult to analyze its greatness; for the young are not easily able to state the reasons for a preference. But in looking for the underlying essence of what makes up true genius, we can usually feel sure that deep insight, natural, even unconscious insight, is a large element in that unstable alchemy. Insight is surely here in all that she has written for young people, insight gained through the overflowing friendliness and the unstinted enthusiasm of interest which Louisa brought to that little school in the barn. We have no record, beyond the two who have been mentioned, of who the small scholars were. But we may be sure that each one of them, in his or her own way, helped that generous, high-spirited impetuous Louisa to learn many of the things that she had to know before writing *LITTLE WOMEN*.



A Practical Way of Celebrating The Alcott Centenary

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IT IS most fitting that the opening event of the Alcott Centenary celebration in New England should have been a production of "Little Women" by a company of distinguished amateurs, first in Concord, Mass., and later in near-by communities. Not only does the dramatization of Louisa Alcott's masterpiece bring the immortal story freshly to mind but it serves to emphasize the kindred art which she loved. For it is well-known that, in early life, she aspired to be an actress and enjoyed amateur theatricals as long as she lived.

Scarcely a story of hers omits some mention of such a pastime among her characters. The pages of her diary abound in references to her own theatrical experiences, and Orchard House preserves among its treasures many costumes which she and her sisters wore when they played their parts gaily in their own dining-room to admiring audiences seated in the adjacent parlor.

No student of her interesting career can fail to realize that there was a deep-seated reason for this love of the drama which pervaded Miss Alcott's life. When writing the RECOLLECTIONS OF MY CHILDHOOD in mature years, she observed: "Being born on the birthday of Columbus, I seem to have something of my patron saint's spirit of adventure." Perhaps there was more in that simple statement than she realized, for her own birthday and her father's fell on the same day, and if there ever was an explorer in the realms of the mind and spirit, it was Amos Bronson Alcott.

As a child, Mr. Alcott resented the teaching by rote which was the only method employed in the country school-house of his time. Consequently when he

formulated his own system of education, which was best exemplified in his famous Temple School attended by Louisa and her elder sister for a time, he laid great emphasis on self-expression and employed many devices similar to those used by modern kindergartners, to achieve it. So he encouraged dramatization in his own household when his children were very young.

Writing of Anna and Louisa at this period, he said: "They are much delighted with dramatic pastimes. Among the stock pieces on their little theatre are Wilson's Snow Storm, in which Louisa is very successful in personating the character of Hannah Lee, left in the snow; The Old Woman and the Pedlar (a profound drama on personal identity), and Little Henry and the Gypsies. They are personated every evening with ever new delight. The accompaniment of music and dancing are also superadded. The hour before going to bed is uniformly devoted to these embodyings of the Ideal: after which comes the Story and they pass to the world of sleep to enjoy the full ideal—."

No wonder that the Alcott girls loved the drama all their lives and that Louisa could not imagine a child character in any of her tales who did not love it too. In this she recognized a universal trait in childhood.

Miss Katherine Cornell,¹ the distinguished actress who played the part of "Jo" in the version of LITTLE WOMEN put on in London just after the close of the Great War, expressed this idea when she said in an interview: "All children love to dress

¹ Miss Cornell played in Miss Jessie Bonstell's production of *Little Women*.

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Life in the 60's As Reflected in the Alcott Books*

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NEW England in the 60's was a cultural center as it is now, and Boston and Concord knew many figures of note. The influence of Emerson was profound, particularly upon those who were privileged to know him as neighbor and friend, as did the Alcotts. Bronson Alcott, himself a philosopher, certainly tried to give his children high ideals and visions of the distant mountain peaks of thought. Louisa, most of all, absorbed a great deal from him, read extensively, and shaped these lofty concepts into her philosophy of life. Many of these ideals and ideas were redistilled into her books.

The 60's present a much more human and appealing didacticism than that of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when priggish little boys and girls and touching death-bed scenes of child saints were the order of the day in books. Mrs. Jo's "conscience book" in *LITTLE MEN* was a secret between her and each of her "boys." Their heart-to-heart talks contain much common sense and understanding of the real problems and philosophy of living. I wonder how many readers, like myself, learned to skip the preaching very skillfully and get on with the story?

Unlike most women in her social sphere Louisa Alcott extolled work as an end in itself and praised the dignity of labor. Menial labor was considered rather vulgar, except by people as eccentric as the Alcotts. The homely arts of cooking, housekeeping, nursing and sewing were a part of every girl's training, to be sure. With the exception of sewing, however, one learned these accomplishments to be able to direct

servants rather than to perform them herself.

Such fashionable accomplishments as dancing, French, and a smattering of music and painting were regarded with more favor, and were considered a part of a girl's "finishing." If possible, a trip to Europe was arranged to complete the process before she was presented to society. The thoroughly honest Miss Alcott poked a great deal of fun at this thin veneer of culture, most notably in *AN OLD FASHIONED GIRL* and *EIGHT COUSINS*. She loved music and art and felt that they were hard task-masters who only rewarded the truly earnest and persevering. Amy in *LITTLE WOMEN* represented her idea of the true artist, and Nat, in *LITTLE MEN* and *JO'S BOYS*, the musician. Honest enjoyment of music and pleasure in producing it comes up again and again in her books; Laurie, Beth, Phoebe, and others demonstrate the importance of music in the life of the times.

Life was not too real nor earnest for a good share of amusements, however. It is here that one feels the love of nature. The semi-rural environment of much of the population at this period brought them close to green fields and shady woods, and they weren't too delicate nor lady-like to take advantage of it. The children romped in the barns and coasted down the hills, and their elders enjoyed a picnic, a boating trip, or a brisk gallop as much as we now do. Teas and dinners, parties and concerts, receptions and routs were given in great numbers during the "season." It is rather amusing to read that Rose in *ROSE IN BLOOM*, only danced round dances at these entertainments with members of her own family, and modestly and decorously

*Prepared under the direction of the Chairman of the Book Evaluation Committee of the A. L. A., Miss Eugenia Brunot.

allowed her suitors such favors as square dances and sitting out.

Sewing circles were popular among the ladies, as was debating with the men. The family was a very important bond; cousins, uncles, aunts, brothers, sisters and all the ramifications thereof gathered for weddings, funerals, holidays and to sit as a court in time of great decisions. Regard for one's kin was a sacred if not always a pleasant duty, and blood was many, many times thicker than water. At family gatherings or other informal social meetings one of the chiefest means of entertaining was charades. Anyone who has played this game knows what a good time they must have had. Amateur theatricals and concerts were frequently arranged by the young people.

In *UNDER THE LILACS* we find: "Seeing how glad the children were to get a new story, Miss Celia was moved to send a box of books, old and new, to the town library, which was but scantily supplied, as county libraries are apt to be. This donation produced a good effect, for other people hunted up all the volumes they could spare for the same purpose, and the dusty shelves in the little room behind the post-office filled up amazingly." One could have found Scott, no doubt, and Dickens, Edgeworth and Brontë, the *ARABIAN NIGHTS*, *ROBINSON CRUSOE*, *PILGRIM'S PROGRESS*, and, perhaps, some fairy tales there.

Of the Civil War there is surprisingly little in Miss Alcott's books, save *HOSPITAL SKETCHES* and the remote reflection in *LITTLE WOMEN* when Marmee goes to nurse. Perhaps the horrors Miss Alcott endured in her brief nursing experience made her reluctant to recall anything connected with the war. The Abolitionist spirit crops up now and then, such as the scene of weekly devotions in *LITTLE MEN*. "In this family, master and servant, old and young, black and white, shared in the Sunday song, which went up to the Father of them all."

The men in the Alcott books engaged in a few professions. Teaching seems to

take the most important place, then the ministry, and third, medicine. Music was regarded as a splendid field but journalism and the stage were looked upon with great disfavor. That familiarity with the sea and ships so typical of New England is reflected in *EIGHT COUSINS*, although rare silks, ivories, brasses and other treasures from far-away ports are found in all the books. Tommy Bangs, in *JO'S BOYS*, became a merchant, but otherwise we read little of the great world of commerce. "Stuffy became an alderman, and died suddenly of apoplexy after a public dinner." This would lead one to believe that Miss Alcott didn't think much of politics; or did she consider apoplexy the fit reward of over-eating public servants? The science of the period was represented by naturalists and geologists. Military life was not extolled. There are occasional glimpses of farmers, but always from the view-point of the village or estate.

It is delightfully surprising to find suggestions of the beginnings of modern movements, many of which Miss Alcott championed. In *LITTLE MEN* and *JO'S BOYS* more intelligent and humane educational methods were practised. The gardens and handicraft in the former book were certainly forerunners of vocational education. The rather belligerent defense of co-education in *JO'S BOYS* shows which way the wind was blowing, too. One of the most lovable traits of Miss Alcott was her understanding of children and her treatment of them in books and life as real individuals instead of small-sized copies of their elders to be admonished with the hateful "Children should be seen and not heard." Another pleasant thing was her love of animals and sympathy for those who were mistreated. In *UNDER THE LILACS* there is mention of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

The passages on dress reform in *AN OLD-FASHIONED GIRL* and *EIGHT COUSINS* are very funny, now, and certainly express the impatience of jolly Jo with the hampering confines of whalebone and

Early American Writers for Children: Lydia H. Sigourney

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ONE OF the strangest and most significant paradoxes in American literature is the fate of Lydia H. Sigourney. During a long lifetime, and especially during her most productive years, she achieved a popularity in this country surpassed only by that of Longfellow. Although a "female poet" whose husband and son, as long as they lived, were ashamed of her success as a writer, living in a period in our national history when a woman who won distinction in any field outside of the home was outrageously stigmatized, she yet created for herself an unusual literary success and a reputation as a model of "female piety and marital felicity." At a time when our first feminine genius, Margaret Fuller, was wrecking her life in an attempt to emancipate women from the selfish, "womanly woman" ideal of the masculine world, thus anticipating Ibsen, Meredith and Shaw, Mrs. Sigourney was winning an international fame as an exponent of sentimentality, easy tears, and virtue that is always rewarded. This international success came in spite of the fact that she did not write even one line of real poetry. When she died in March, 1865, Emily Dickinson, that superb artist, the most modern of our moderns, had already written at least a few of the poems that were to startle the reading world when they first appeared in 1890.

I can find nowhere in the many facile poems for children of Mrs. Sigourney evidence that she was influenced by the revolutionary ideas concerning childhood which were creeping into our national life. Although an elementary teacher until her marriage, and after that, so she boasted, the "Coryphaeus" of her husband's chil-

dren by a former marriage, she probably was not aware of our fight for free schools for all children, one of the most stupendous events of the nineteenth century. The innovative work with very young children by Miss Elizabeth Peabody,¹ which attracted attention at least in the intellectual world, also received no consideration from her. That passionate literary protest against exploitation of childhood, which entered our minor literature before the enormous success of Dickens popularized it, in a slight way did give her a subject for tearful poems; however, the intensity and honesty found in "The Cry of the Children" and OLIVER TWIST, as well as in Elizabeth Oakes Smith's THE NEWSBOY (1841), probably the first American humanitarian book on childhood, are entirely lacking in the poetry of Mrs. Sigourney.

Her position as a poet for children is clear enough: she supplied the current demand for moral and religious verse and, when the demand ceased, she had not even one poem good enough to be included in the modern anthologies. Her contemporaries, Anna M. Wells, Lydia Maria Child and Sarah Josepha Hale, although they too were guilty of too much preaching, fared better. One still finds in children's collections of poetry a number of graceful lyrics, a trifle too dainty and slightly inane, by Mrs. Wells; Mrs. Child, also a prolific poet for children is immortalized as the author of two of the finest bits of juvenile verse we have — "Thanksgiving" and "Who Stole the Bird's Nest"; and Sarah Josepha Hale, al-

1 Editor's Note: The reader will recall that Mrs. Sigourney was a contemporary of Amos Bronson Alcott. Miss Elizabeth Peabody was Mr. Alcott's assistant in his Temple School in Boston.

though England and Henry Ford think otherwise, we know now is the author of one of the two best loved poems for children in American literature, "Mary's Little Lamb." (The other, of course, is "A Visit from St. Nicholas" by Clement Clarke Moore published anonymously as early as 1823).

Like the early theological poets of the NEW ENGLAND PRIMER, Mrs. Sigourney found a popular subject in the early deaths of children. Her recent biographer, Gordon S. Haight (MRS. SIGOURNEY, THE SWEET SINGER OF HARTFORD, an excellent study published in 1930) claims that this was caused partly by the fact that her first three children died at birth; she capitalized on her grief with atrocious bad taste and, finding the public liked it, continued using the recipe in endless poems. Perhaps she is not to be blamed for this, since most of the poets were doing it. Not until Lowell wrote his four poems on his dead children and Emerson his noble "Threnody" on "Little Waldo" did we have in this country the death of a child portrayed with dignity in great poetry.

When not writing of death Mrs. Sigourney preached with weary iteration the necessity of being good. Like Kingsley in his famous poem she warned children against an ambition to achieve cleverness; like him again she apparently never realized that goodness and cleverness may go together very well indeed. "Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever," suggesting at least that one can't be both good and clever at the same time, might well have been a favorite philosophy with her.

There must have been something in her poetry for children, however, which, though archaic now, was worthy of acceptance in her day. Many contemporaries whose taste we still respect praised her. Miss Alcott, whose reading life as a child was directed by both Emerson and her father, says that her poem, "I Must Not Tease My Mother," was for years

a favorite with her;² Maria Edgeworth praised her extravagantly; Poe, our greatest critic before the modern movement, thought she possessed real ability; and Whittier, whom she had befriended while a young man, wrote the elegy for her when she passed away.

Typical Poems for Children
By Mrs. Sigourney.

I MUST NOT TEASE MY MOTHER

I must not tease my mother,
For she is very kind;
And everything she says to me
I must directly mind;
For when I was a baby
And could not speak or walk,
She let me in her bosom sleep,
And taught me how to talk.

I must not tease my mother;
And when she likes to read,
Or has the headache, I will step
Most silently indeed;
I will not choose a noisy play,
Nor trifling troubles tell,
But sit down quiet by her side,
And try to make her well.

I must not tease my mother;
I've heard dear father say,
When I was in my cradle sick
She nursed me night and day;
She lays me in my little bed,
She gives me clothes and food,
And I have nothing else to pay
But trying to be good.

I must not tease my mother;
She loves me all the day,
And she has patience with my faults,
And teaches me to pray.
How much I'll strive to please her,
She every hour shall see;
For should she go away or die,
What would become of me?

² Ten-year-old Louisa Alcott wrote in her diary: "As I went to bed, the moon came up very brightly and looked at me. I felt sad because I have been cross today, and did not mind Mother. I cried, and then I felt better, and said that piece from Mrs. Sigourney, 'I must not tease my mother.' I got to sleep by saying poetry,—I know a great deal." (From *Louisa May Alcott, Her Life, Letters, and Journals*. Edited by Ednah D. Cheney, Little, Brown.)

Choosing Children's Books

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(Continued from October)

ANOTHER field of child literature that has attracted to it many artists is that of poetry. It is difficult in so short a space to give any adequate conception of the lovely poetry, both of the older school and of the modern type, from which we may choose. And some should be chosen from both groups, for the child's literary heritage now includes both the old and the new. A study of children's preferences shows clearly that among the poets who have celebrated childhood the children have chosen for their own those whose poetry is genuine. The unwaning popularity of *Mother Goose* from generation to generation stands as proof of the child's loyalty to the best. In our own time we have seen the welcome accorded by children to the poetry of Walter de la Mare. In the same way children have cared for William Blake's *SONGS OF INNOCENCE* when adults have permitted them to enjoy in their own fashion those matchless songs of childhood.

Through the earlier years we rightly seek to enlarge the experience of children with poetry by introducing them to the verse of Stevenson, Eugene Field, James Whitcomb Riley, Christina Rossetti and others who have a rightful place among the classics. Among the modern poets, many are well on their way to become classics and are now prime favorites. A. A. Milne, Annette Wynne, Rose Fyleman, Ralph Bergen, Vachel Lindsay, Carl Sandburg, Nancy Byrd Turner, and so many others I cannot take the space to include them all. The child poets, Hilda Conkling and Helen Douglas Adam, have also been accepted as artists of worth.

Children rightly crave the pleasures of of humor that come to them through the acquaintance with good nonsense verse. They delight in the extravagance, the whimsical fancy, the amazing words, swinging rhythms and clever rhymes in which the best nonsense verse abounds. Edward Lear, Lewis Carroll and A. A. Milne are outstanding in this field. The nonsense anthology includes many other artists, however, among whom are Field, Riley, Hugh Lofting, Laura E. Richards, and Carolyn Wells.

For the older children the appeal of the heroic and romantic is found in many of the poems of John Masefield, Rudyard Kipling, Arthur Guiterman and others. A large number of this type of poems may be found in a volume called *THIS SINGING WORLD* by Louis Untermeyer and *ENGLISH NARRATIVE POEMS* by Fuess and Sandborn. Other good collections are *SILVER PENNIES*, by Blanche Thompson, *HOME BOOK OF VERSE*, by Burton Stevenson, and *THE POSY RING* by Wiggin and Smith.

Books of poems by individual authors occupy a large place in the literature of children today. A lovely book of poems by Ralph Bergren has recently been added to the Hastings Children's Library. It is beautifully illustrated by Maurice Day, and comes from the Atlantic Press. *LITTLE BROTHER GOOSE* is a charming volume for small children by Anna Stewart. *FAIRIES AND CHIMNEYS* by Rose Fyleman and *PEACOCK PIE* by Walter de la Mare are great favorites, as are A. A. Milne's *WHEN WE WERE VERY YOUNG* and *NOW WE ARE SIX*.

In the field of folk tales, we must look

to the great source collections for our best material. Although the collections of folk tales are so many that they cannot be mentioned here, a few sources of the tales most popular with children may be suggested. Chronologically, the first collection demanding attention is *ARABIAN NIGHTS*. Many fine editions of these stories may be had. One edition by Wiggin and Smith is gloriously illustrated by Maxfield Parrish. His rich blues and browns are peculiarly adapted to these oriental stories.

The French fairy tales by Perrault, the English collection by Jacobs, the German of the Grimm brothers, and the Norse by Asbjornson and Moe, translated by Dasent, constitute the most commonly used folk tales. Those from the Japanese by Willitson, from India by Ferre, and from the Irish by MacManus have grown in popularity in recent years. Miss Ella Young, who has spent over twenty years with the folk peoples of Ireland, has given us some fine characterizations of these interesting people. *THE WONDERSMITH AND HIS SON* is one of her best books.

STORIES OF A BASQUE GRANDMOTHER by Frances Carpenter, *TALES FROM THE SWISS ALPS* by Baumbach, and *AMERICAN FOLK AND FAIRY TALES* by Rachel Field are examples of folk literature that have recently come to us with fine literary treatment.

The myth, fable, legend, romance-cycle and other types of traditional literature have received excellent reconditioning by such literary artists as Abbie Farwell Brown, Church, Padraic Colum, Baldwin, Howard Pyle and Mabie. The Negro and Indian folk tales constitute another important field of literature for children. The Uncle Remus stories of Joel Chandler Harris occupy first place among the Negro tales, but there are many outstanding authors in the field of Indian folk tales, among whom are Linderman, Grinnell, Eastman and DeHuff.

The field of the modern fairy story

leaves us on the verge of despair as to choice, even with the aid of the valuable aids before mentioned. Modern writers of fairy tales imitate every kind of folk tale with much overlapping of types. But children find many of these stories uninteresting. They seem to realize instinctively that the writers are not sincere, that the stories do not ring true. Exception should be made of the Irish writers who have preserved their childlike fancies to a remarkable degree. Among the most successful of the modern fairy tales are those by Hans Christian Andersen, who like the Irish writers does not "write down" to children but writes out of the fullness of his own childlike fancies.

A few typical examples in the modern fantastic field are *THE BLUEBIRD*, by Maeterlinck, *PETER PAN*, by Barrie, *THE FAIRY CARAVAN*, by Potter, *THE FAIRY CIRCUS*, by Lathrop, *THE PRINCESS AND THE GOBLIN* by MacDonald, and *PETER PEA AND GRESHNA AND HIS CLAY PIG*, Russian tales by N. G. Grishina.

Books of fiction are so much a part of the subject-matter books that it is difficult to separate them. Good modern fiction for children includes such books as *THE GLEAM IN THE NORTH* by Broster, *JIM DAVIS*, by Masefield, *SWALLOWDALE*, by Ransome, *MOUNTAIN GIRL*, by Fox, and *THE KINGDOM OF THE WINDING ROAD*, by Cornelia Meigs.

As children grow older, their natural, unspoiled curiosity concerning their immediate environment and the world at large is one of their greatest intellectual assets and sources of pleasure. Then it is that the rich vicarious experiences afforded by books about different times, lands, people, events, animal and plant life and many other subjects, render leisure hours seasons of delight. While eagerness to know much and live widely is at its keenest, teachers and librarians should suggest books and more books containing matter which their spirits crave. These types of books are included among the subject-matter books.

History for children should be of such a character that it reconstructs life and enables boys and girls to live what they read. The gist of the matter is well stated in what a child said of Margaret Pumphrey's *STORIES OF PILGRIMS*. "It is history but it reads like a story." Two of the newer books which admirably meet this standard are *OUT OF THE FLAME* by Lownsberry and *DEBBY BARNES, TRADER* by Constance Skinner. Others in this field which deserve special mention are *A CHILD'S HISTORY OF THE WORLD*, by V. M. Hillyer; *A LITTLE MAID OF PROVINCE TOWN*, by A. T. Curtis; *WHAT TIME IS IT* and *BLACK ON WHITE* by Ilin, a Russian writer.

Since the method of gaining first hand information of peoples and countries by means of travel is denied to many, we must accept the next best thing, vicarious travel by means of books. These books, if they are to be of the most value, must be a source of enjoyment at the same time that they give understanding and appreciation of human-kind, human affairs and their general setting. The content of these books must deal with many peoples and places in order to extend the vision and deepen the insight of the reader. No clear line can be drawn between history and geography but there are many books that may be clearly classified as geography and travel.

Good books of this type are *SNOW BABY*, by Mrs. Peary; *SOUTH*, by Ernest Shackleton; *THE TWIN BOOKS*, by Lucy Fitch Perkins; *HEIDI* and *MONI*, by Johanna Spyri. *MAPS OF THE STATES* by Berta and Elmer Hader and *NORTH AMERICA* by Lucy Sprague Mitchell are two of the most recent contributions to this field.

By far the most comprehensive class of scientific books for children are those known as nature books, some of which are undesirable, but many of which are very valuable. Some of the best of these books are based upon the writer's observation and study of science as are the works of

John Burroughs, Edith Patch, Henri Fabre, and David Starr Jordan. These authors weave into semi-story form scientific facts which are more marvelous and interest-compelling than any achievements of human magic.

Other excellent nature books by such popular writers as Ernest Thompson Seton, Clarence Hawkes, Enos Mills, William Beebe, and W. H. Hudson, present facts colored by imagination in such a way as to develop a real interest in nature, to lead to habits of observation, and to cultivate wholesome out-of-door interests and activities.

The question usually arises at some time in the experience of librarians as to how we may eliminate books that are no longer considered good literature for children. Most of these books may be classified as the "series" books. They are of the "Dotty Dimples," "Elsie Dinsmore" and "Little Colonel" types for girls and the Mead, Alger, and Henty types for boys. As a rule, the books of a series are all alike,—pretty boarding-school stories for girls affording a weak, milk-and-water diet, which induces mental if not moral deterioration; athletic or highly sensational stories for boys, nearly always vapid and untrue to life, and unprofitable if not actually injurious. The worst feature of a series, generally speaking, lies in the fact that when the child has read one book of the series he has read them all; but the themes are so fascinating to his immature mind, which would grasp just as eagerly the strong, virile stories of the *ODYSSEY*, the *JUNGLE BOOKS*, and the *BOY'S KING ARTHUR*, that he will read and re-read the entire series unless stimulated to read better types.

The Library Journal recently printed a list of books which may be suggested to children as substitutes for these series books. Some companion books are also available which satisfy the demand for "another book just like this one." *CRICKET* and *CIVILIZING CRICKET* by Forrestine Hooker are good examples of

this type as are the DOCTOR DOLITTLE books of Hugh Lofting.

Undesirable books other than the Alger and Henty type, which have been frankly discarded by libraries, may be eliminated by not replacing them when they are worn out but substituting others from selected lists.

I believe a very good watchword for children's librarians would be the suggestion made to me by a librarian when discussing this problem:—"We try to keep no book for which we need to apologize."

Another responsibility of the juvenile library is that of making the department so attractive to children that they will return again and again, thus building up a habit of reading for recreation which will tend to reduce the undesirable habitual use of leisure time now in practice. The big problem is that of creating a situation in which the children will *ask* for the type of book they want to read, giving you the opportunity to suggest desirable books. Putting lists of so-called "good books" before children and telling them they *ought* to read them often has a contrary effect. They tend to shy off and choose for themselves. One group of people insists upon pressure in influencing the child's reading while another takes the opposite extreme in believing that such pressure is almost, if not quite, immoral. A middle ground between these courses, which suggests the two old sayings—"Little birds who can sing and won't sing should be made to sing" and "You can drive a horse to water but you can't make him drink" may be interpreted by the librarian somewhat as follows: — "You can make the little bird sing, you can make the horse drink, if you make the bird happy and the horse thirsty."

Proceeding with something like this thesis in mind, good librarians are using

all or some of the following motivations to attract children to good reading:

1. Attractively arranged displays of new and old books with posters suggesting the general field of interest included.
2. Books opened to interesting illustrations and placed on the top of book shelves.
3. Classified lists of books typed and put in book form with attractive covers. These are placed where children may use them independently or the librarian may suggest their use when appealed to for suggestions.
4. A "Little Theatre" in which a scene from an interesting book is represented by means of miniature scenery and characters. The schools have co-operated in supplying these representations and individual children have often done this work.
5. Pictures representing characters in stories, such as "Jack and the Beanstalk," and stereoptican pictures for the children's use as they desire, stimulate curiosity as well as make the library more attractive.
6. A story hour plays a large part in influencing children's reading. Stories may be told by the librarian, or by some one in the community.
7. Stimulating summer reading by organizing centers of interest, such as travel trips into various countries. This may be done by selecting books relating to various countries, keeping records of books read and giving book awards for the most books read.

The juvenile librarians of the nation have a great responsibility in the character building of children. While feeling the weight of this responsibility, they still have an extremely fascinating and interesting field of work which should afford compensation to the fullest degree.

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EUGENIA BRUNOT

Chairman, Book Evaluation Committee
American Library Association

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Hilda Conkling*

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ARE THE poems of Hilda Conkling the work of a child-prodigy or merely the very successful effort of an imaginative child in whom the creative faculty was allowed to develop? This is a very difficult question to answer with any degree of certainty. However it must be admitted that few children are so fortunate in their environment and surroundings as Hilda was; for she had the constant companionship of a mother who knew how to kindle the flame rather than destroy it. In addition, she was reared in the midst of much natural beauty. Her poems show the extent to which she responded to nature as she saw it and felt its influence in and around her home in Northampton.

Hilda depended upon books and nature for her little dream-songs. She makes this very plain in her poem, "Shady Bronn," composed at the age of five.

"When the clouds come deep against the sky

I sit alone in my room to think,
To remember the fairy dreams I made,
Listening to the rustling out of the trees.
The stories in my fairy-tale book
Come new to me every day.

But at my farm on the hill-top
I have the wind for a fairy,
And the shapes of things:

Shady Bronn is the name of my little farm:

It is the name of a dream I have
Where leaves move,
And the wind rings them like little bells."¹

*The poems by Hilda Conkling are reprinted by special permission of the publishers and copyright owners, Frederick A. Stokes Company.

¹ Poems by a Little Girl

After reading "Shady Bronn" one naturally concludes that Hilda has a very tender spot in her heart for her fairy poems. Of course she has, for they are the most charming of her poems suggested by books. She has not created anything unusual or new in her fairy characters—they do come, in truth, from books; but she, nevertheless, has introduced settings and scenes that are all her own. In one of these poems she has transformed her own beautiful hill country into a fairy-land and there upon the mountain-tops, she sees the fairies' wings glittering under the stars; she hears the crickets play all the tunes they know, while the fairy queen walks slowly to her high throne, "Slowly Slowly, to Music," and watches the dancing that goes on "All night long in star-glitter."

"Peacock Feathers" is a very original little poem which contains a touch of mysticism:

"On trees of fairyland
Grow peacock feathers of daylight colors
Like an Austrian fan.
But there is a strange thing!
I have heard that night gathers these feathers
For her cloak;
I have heard that the stars, the moon,
Are the eyes of peacock feathers
From fairy trees."¹

In "Fairies Again" there is also a very beautiful and original thought:

"Fairies with sparkling crowns and dewy hands,
Sprinkle flowers and mosses to keep them fresh,
Talk to the birds to keep them cheery."¹

Like all very imaginative children, Hilda knows fairies first-hand. She says in "Fairies",

"There's no fairy can hide from me;
I keep on dreaming till I find him."

With two exceptions, all of Hilda's fairy poems appear in the volume written before she was ten. In her second volume, "Shoes of the Wind," she has a very attractive little poem called "Dryads."

"Don't scold willows,
They are dryad trees!
If you find a dryad,
Dolores, my dear,
She will kiss you, maybe . . .
Make you young again!"

Hilda's nature poems are her best; for it is in these amazingly poetic little verses that she combines the two possessions that make her a real poet—the power of accurate observation and the gift of imagination. It is in these poems, too, that she is both the child and the artist. Note the child's idea expressed by the artist, in "Water."

"The world turns softly
Not to spill its lakes and rivers.
The water is held in its arms
And the sky is held in the water.
What is water,
That pours silver,
And can hold the sky?"²

One of the most imaginative of her nature poems is "Sunbeams":

"Sunbeams sing little folk-songs
About fairies, about Neptune
And those old gods . . .
Sunbeams remember the world being
made:
Grasses and small things
Remind them.

2 Poems by a Little Girl

I have heard them speaking another
language
As though the sun-god heard,
But I can understand better their oriole-
talk
And their songs of delight
After rain."³

These nature poems represent Hilda perfectly; for they bespeak the child-poet—a child far enough in advance of the average child in her depth of thought and expression of beauty to cause all of her little boy and girl admirers throughout the country to "reach-up" that they may be one with her in enjoyment and appreciation. A great favorite with children is "Dandelion." They laugh as they catch a glimpse of the soldier with the green gun and yellow beard, guarding the lawn "Where there is only grass to fight." Even the small children enjoy "Mouse", "Chickadee", "The Champlain Sandman" and "Butterfly". The more imaginative children enjoy many of her poems, especially "The White Cloud", "The Old Bridge", "Bluebird", "Fairies Again", and "The Dream."

Hilda seldom thinks in rhyme and meter. She builds her poems upon cadence and beautiful pictures or images. Some of her most beautiful and striking pictures remind one of Amy Lowell. See how clear-cut and vivid these pictures are:

"Inside the ring the wind wore sandals
Not to make a noise of going."

"The hands of the trees were bare
And their fingers fluttered."⁴

In the poem "Red Rooster" she says:

"The short feathers smooth along your
back
Are the dark color of wet rocks,
Or the rippled green of ships
When I look at their sides through
water."⁴

3 Shoes of the Wind

4 Poems by a Little Girl

There are perhaps many children in the world today who have this native sense of beauty that Hilda possesses in such large measure, but apparently there are few so guided that it finds expression. Hilda tells in several of her little verses referring to her mother, how she felt about her mother's sympathetic understanding of what she was trying to do.

"If I sing you listen,
If I think you know."

"I have found a way of thinking
To make you happy."⁴

Hilda Conkling, the daughter of Grace Hazard Conkling, was born in 1910 at

Catskill-on-Hudson, New York. She published her first volume of poems, *POEMS BY A LITTLE GIRL*, in 1920. Her second volume, *SHOES OF THE WIND*, came out in 1922. In 1924, Mrs. Conkling, her mother, with the advice of several leading librarians, brought together, from the two volumes already published, the poems that boys and girls have shown a preference for. This volume came out under the title *SILVERHORN*.

Miss Conkling is now twenty years of age. She is busily engaged in the study of languages—especially French. She has had a year in France at school in Versailles, and is continuing to write, but is not publishing now.

CELEBRATING THE ALCOTT CENTENARY

(Continued from page 230)

up and pretend. All grown-ups love to pretend. A bit of the actor is in every human being."

So it would seem most fitting, if all Alcott lovers could take part in a universal celebration and Alcott parties be held in homes and schools from coast to coast some time between the actual birthday of the author on November 29th and the first of the new year. Children loved the colonial costume parties which the Washington Bicentenary brought forth during the year just closing, but parties where they could dress and act the characters of their favorite boy and girl friends in all the list of Alcott juveniles, still read by children everywhere, would have a distinct appeal.

The costuming of such parts would be comparatively easy, for the style of dress has been described in many places in Miss Alcott's own words, and the elder generation still recalls how such clothes were made. Then many family attics yet treasure gowns and furbelows of the seventies and eighties.

A generation ago, Dickens parties were much in vogue, and in some communities,

Dickens clubs still carry out the idea at some annual festival. Why not adopt this method of celebrating the anniversary of the creator of so many characters whose names are household words and whose experiences are so well-known?

Possibilities of this sort for Christmas and New Year celebrations are numerous. Biographical material about the Alcotts is full of references to the simple, old-fashioned but beautiful way in which the real Little Women celebrated Christmas, and Christmas stories and incidents abound in the Alcott books. Then, too, the good old custom of keeping open house and receiving gentlemen callers on New Year's Day which was such an important part of the social life of every eastern city in Miss Alcott's girlhood, is reflected in the pages of her stories. In her honor, that custom, too, might be revived in connection with a costume party on the New Year so near her birthday.

Could there be any happier celebration of this happy event than the recreating of her brain-children for a little period by the boys and girls of the twentieth century?

(Continued from page 232)

flounces, high heels and tight skirts. In *JO'S BOYS* we find, "Dr. Nan was telling me about a patient of hers who thought she had heart-trouble, till Nan made her take off her corsets, stopped her coffee and dancing all night, and made her eat, sleep, walk, and live regularly for a time; and now she's a brilliant cure."

Women were beginning to yearn for greater freedom, professional, social and political. Again in *JO'S BOYS*, Nan held a court and made all the boys say they believed in Woman Suffrage. This same Nan was evidently the apple of her creator's eye, for she did all sorts of interesting and independent things that Jo must have longed to do, ending up as a famous doctor, free and untrammelled by matrimony and sentimental attachments. Certainly she was a forerunner of the modern professional woman.

Riches were regarded as pleasant but not indispensable, and people of wealth were

shown as having a great responsibility because of their possessions. The beginning of philanthropy in its modern sense is illustrated particularly by Mr. Lawrence and then Laurie, and to a lesser degree by Rose.

The 60's take on a warm and human quality when presented by Miss Alcott. These people weren't so different after all. The boys and girls quarrelled and made up, were selfish and awkward, spilled coffee at parties and lost their gloves, played jokes and got into mischief. People loved and hated, feared and hoped, were gay and sad, just as they are now. Their thoughts, manners, and morals were often shaped by the seriousness of the age, as their bodies were by the confines of a more artificial and rigid fashion. However, the "touch of nature" makes the books to live and be loved for their true worth, and the period seems less remote in essentials than the outer trappings suggest.



LYDIA H. SIGOURNEY

(Continued from page 234)

THE CAMEL'S NOSE

Once in his shop a workman wrought,
With languid head and listless thought,
When, through the open window's space,
Behold, a camel thrust his face!
"My nose is cold," he meekly cried;
"Oh, let me warm it by thy side!"

Since no denial word was said,
In came the nose, in came the head:
As sure as sermon follows text,
The long and scraggy neck came next;
And then, as falls the threatening storm,
In leaped the whole ungainly form.

Aghast the owner gazed around,
And on the rude invader frowned,
Convinced, as closer still he pressed,
There was no room for such a guest;
Yet more astonished, heard him say,
"If thou art troubled go away,
For in this place I choose to stay."

O youthful hearts to gladness born,
Treat not this Arab lore with scorn!
To evil habit's earliest wile
Lend neither ear, nor glance, nor smile.
Choke the dark fountain ere it flows,
Nor e'en admit the camel's nose!

LOVE YOUR LITTLE BROTHER

I had a little friend;
And every day he crept
In sadness to his brother's tomb,
And laid him down and wept.
And when I asked him why
He mourned so long and sore,
He answered through his tears, "Because
I did not love him more.

"Sometimes I was not kind,
Or cross, or coldly spake;"
And then he turned away, and sobbed
As though his heart would break.

(Continued on page 248)

Editorial

Louisa Alcott's Father

THE observance, on November 29, of the one hundredth anniversary of Louisa Alcott's birth, turns the attention of elementary school teachers to her father, Amos Bronson Alcott, who directed the education of his daughters, and was so largely responsible for their after lives. His virtues as a teacher were not realized in his day, and they have not yet been fully recognized. Yet perhaps no account of the education of creative ability is more rewarding than that of the Alcotts. Ednah Cheney's edition of *Louisa Alcott's LIFE, LETTERS, AND JOURNALS*, Honore Wilsie Morrow's *THE FATHER OF LITTLE WOMEN*, and Sanborn and Harris's *A. BRONSON ALCOTT, HIS LIFE AND PHILOSOPHY* are rich in suggestion to teachers who wish to encourage creative writing.

The rich home life of the Alcotts is familiar to all readers of Louisa's books. Harassed for years by poverty, Bronson and his wife Abba May Alcott were yet able to give their children a childhood so happy that it has stood as an ideal to Americans for three generations. With all the dutiful nineteenth century respect for parents, there was no fear, nor even timidity in the relations of the little Alcotts and their elders. Indeed, the girls were far from the "seen but not heard" admonition of that time. An amusing instance of this is given in Louisa's *LIFE, LETTERS AND JOURNALS*. Margaret Fuller, calling on the Alcotts one afternoon, expressed the desire to see the "model children." As she was leaving, the children came shouting around the corner of the house. Baby May (Amy, in *LITTLE WOMEN*) was riding in a wheelbarrow in the role of queen, Louisa, "bitted and bridled" was the horse, Anna (Meg) the driver, and Beth, the dog. "Here are my model children, Miss Fuller," exclaimed Mrs. Alcott, waving her hand toward the excited, noisy group.

Nor was the ailing, sickly child who furnished the subject for the sentimental

poetry of the period (see Mr. Roller's paper on Lydia H. Sigourney, page 233) to be found among the Alcotts. The girls were encouraged to romp through the woods and fields about Concord. Louisa's early journals are full of references to the out-of-doors. "We played in the snow before school." "Had a splendid run, and got a box of cones to burn." "I had an early run in the woods before the dew was off the grass. The moss was like velvet, and as I ran under the arches of yellow and red leaves, I sang for joy."

The girls' lively imaginations were further stimulated by home theatricals. (See page 230). Louisa was especially fond of Dickens, and she and her elder sister, Anna, used to play Sairy Gamp and Betsy Prigg to the great delight of their audiences. A household of this sort would, of course, enjoy books, and while Mrs. Alcott and the girls sewed, one of them would read aloud. Scott, Dickens, Cooper, Hawthorne, Shakespeare, and George Sand's *CONSUELO* were among the volumes they enjoyed. Louisa was very fond of *PILGRIM'S PROGRESS*, also.

Except for a few weeks at the district school in the town of Harvard, and for a brief period with Mr. Lane (associated with Mr. Alcott in the Fruitlands enterprise) and with Miss Ford, a governess, Bronson Alcott directed the girls' education. Hampered by lack of subject material, he set lessons for his pupils without the aid of text-books. Examples of his assignments may be found in Louisa's *LIFE, LETTERS AND JOURNALS*. Each of the girls kept a journal—a most valuable training in writing.

Confidence, rich experience, abundant activity, scope for the imagination, and above all, sympathy with all their efforts—this was the training that Amos Bronson Alcott and Abba May Alcott gave their *Little Women*—the best-loved family in American literature. Bronson Alcott in the rearing of his family anticipated the ideals of today in school and home life.

Like all very imaginative children, Hilda knows fairies first-hand. She says in "Fairies",

"There's no fairy can hide from me;
I keep on dreaming till I find him."

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Make you young again!"

Hilda's nature poems are her best; for it is in these amazingly poetic little verses that she combines the two possessions that make her a real poet—the power of accurate observation and the gift of imagination. It is in these poems, too, that she is both the child and the artist. Note the child's idea expressed by the artist, in "Water."

"The world turns softly
Not to spill its lakes and rivers.
The water is held in its arms
And the sky is held in the water.
What is water,
That pours silver,
And can hold the sky?"²

One of the most imaginative of her nature poems is "Sunbeams":

"Sunbeams sing little folk-songs
About fairies, about Neptune
And those old gods . . .
Sunbeams remember the world being
made:
Grasses and small things
Remind them.

2 Poems by a Little Girl

I have heard them speaking another
language
As though the sun-god heard,
But I can understand better their oriole-
talk
And their songs of delight
After rain."³

These nature poems represent Hilda perfectly; for they bespeak the child-poet—a child far enough in advance of the average child in her depth of thought and expression of beauty to cause all of her little boy and girl admirers throughout the country to "reach-up" that they may be one with her in enjoyment and appreciation. A great favorite with children is "Dandelion." They laugh as they catch a glimpse of the soldier with the green gun and yellow beard, guarding the lawn "Where there is only grass to fight." Even the small children enjoy "Mouse", "Chickadee", "The Champlain Sandman" and "Butterfly". The more imaginative children enjoy many of her poems, especially "The White Cloud", "The Old Bridge", "Bluebird", "Fairies Again", and "The Dream."

Hilda seldom thinks in rhyme and meter. She builds her poems upon cadence and beautiful pictures or images. Some of her most beautiful and striking pictures remind one of Amy Lowell. See how clear-cut and vivid these pictures are:

"Inside the ring the wind wore sandals
Not to make a noise of going."

"The hands of the trees were bare
And their fingers fluttered."⁴

In the poem "Red Rooster" she says:

"The short feathers smooth along your
back
Are the dark color of wet rocks,
Or the rippled green of ships
When I look at their sides through
water."⁴

3 Shoes of the Wind

4 Poems by a Little Girl

There are perhaps many children in the world today who have this native sense of beauty that Hilda possesses in such large measure, but apparently there are few so guided that it finds expression. Hilda tells in several of her little verses referring to her mother, how she felt about her mother's sympathetic understanding of what she was trying to do.

"If I sing you listen,
If I think you know."

"I have found a way of thinking
To make you happy."⁴

Hilda Conkling, the daughter of Grace Hazard Conkling, was born in 1910 at

Catskill-on-Hudson, New York. She published her first volume of poems, *POEMS BY A LITTLE GIRL*, in 1920. Her second volume, *SHOES OF THE WIND*, came out in 1922. In 1924, Mrs. Conkling, her mother, with the advice of several leading librarians, brought together, from the two volumes already published, the poems that boys and girls have shown a preference for. This volume came out under the title *SILVERHORN*.

Miss Conkling is now twenty years of age. She is busily engaged in the study of languages—especially French. She has had a year in France at school in Versailles, and is continuing to write, but is not publishing now.

CELEBRATING THE ALCOTT CENTENARY

(Continued from page 230)

up and pretend. All grown-ups love to pretend. A bit of the actor is in every human being."

So it would seem most fitting, if all Alcott lovers could take part in a universal celebration and Alcott parties be held in homes and schools from coast to coast some time between the actual birthday of the author on November 29th and the first of the new year. Children loved the colonial costume parties which the Washington Bicentenary brought forth during the year just closing, but parties where they could dress and act the characters of their favorite boy and girl friends in all the list of Alcott juveniles, still read by children everywhere, would have a distinct appeal.

The costuming of such parts would be comparatively easy, for the style of dress has been described in many places in Miss Alcott's own words, and the elder generation still recalls how such clothes were made. Then many family attics yet treasure gowns and furbelows of the seventies and eighties.

A generation ago, Dickens parties were much in vogue, and in some communities,

Dickens clubs still carry out the idea at some annual festival. Why not adopt this method of celebrating the anniversary of the creator of so many characters whose names are household words and whose experiences are so well-known?

Possibilities of this sort for Christmas and New Year celebrations are numerous. Biographical material about the Alcotts is full of references to the simple, old-fashioned but beautiful way in which the real Little Women celebrated Christmas, and Christmas stories and incidents abound in the Alcott books. Then, too, the good old custom of keeping open house and receiving gentlemen callers on New Year's Day which was such an important part of the social life of every eastern city in Miss Alcott's girlhood, is reflected in the pages of her stories. In her honor, that custom, too, might be revived in connection with a costume party on the New Year so near her birthday.

Could there be any happier celebration of this happy event than the recreating of her brain-children for a little period by the boys and girls of the twentieth century?

(Continued from page 232)

flounces, high heels and tight skirts. In *JO'S BOYS* we find, "Dr. Nan was telling me about a patient of hers who thought she had heart-trouble, till Nan made her take off her corsets, stopped her coffee and dancing all night, and made her eat, sleep, walk, and live regularly for a time; and now she's a brilliant cure."

Women were beginning to yearn for greater freedom, professional, social and political. Again in *JO'S BOYS*, Nan held a court and made all the boys say they believed in Woman Suffrage. This same Nan was evidently the apple of her creator's eye, for she did all sorts of interesting and independent things that Jo must have longed to do, ending up as a famous doctor, free and untrammelled by matrimony and sentimental attachments. Certainly she was a forerunner of the modern professional woman.

Riches were regarded as pleasant but not indispensable, and people of wealth were

shown as having a great responsibility because of their possessions. The beginning of philanthropy in its modern sense is illustrated particularly by Mr. Lawrence and then Laurie, and to a lesser degree by Rose.

The 60's take on a warm and human quality when presented by Miss Alcott. These people weren't so different after all. The boys and girls quarrelled and made up, were selfish and awkward, spilled coffee at parties and lost their gloves, played jokes and got into mischief. People loved and hated, feared and hoped, were gay and sad, just as they are now. Their thoughts, manners, and morals were often shaped by the seriousness of the age, as their bodies were by the confines of a more artificial and rigid fashion. However, the "touch of nature" makes the books to live and be loved for their true worth, and the period seems less remote in essentials than the outer trappings suggest.



LYDIA H. SIGOURNEY

(Continued from page 234)

THE CAMEL'S NOSE

Once in his shop a workman wrought,
With languid head and listless thought,
When, through the open window's space,
Behold, a camel thrust his face!
"My nose is cold," he meekly cried;
"Oh, let me warm it by thy side!"

Since no denial word was said,
In came the nose, in came the head:
As sure as sermon follows text,
The long and scraggy neck came next;
And then, as falls the threatening storm,
In leaped the whole ungainly form.

Aghast the owner gazed around,
And on the rude invader frowned,
Convinced, as closer still he pressed,
There was no room for such a guest;
Yet more astonished, heard him say,
"If thou art troubled go away,
For in this place I choose to stay."

O youthful hearts to gladness born,
Treat not this Arab lore with scorn!
To evil habit's earliest wile
Lend neither ear, nor glance, nor smile.
Choke the dark fountain ere it flows,
Nor e'en admit the camel's nose!

LOVE YOUR LITTLE BROTHER

I had a little friend;
And every day he crept
In sadness to his brother's tomb,
And laid him down and wept.
And when I asked him why
He mourned so long and sore,
He answered through his tears, "Because
I did not love him more.

"Sometimes I was not kind,
Or cross, or coldly spake;"
And then he turned away, and sobbed
As though his heart would break.

(Continued on page 248)

Editorial

Louisa Alcott's Father

THE observance, on November 29, of the one hundredth anniversary of Louisa Alcott's birth, turns the attention of elementary school teachers to her father, Amos Bronson Alcott, who directed the education of his daughters, and was so largely responsible for their after lives. His virtues as a teacher were not realized in his day, and they have not yet been fully recognized. Yet perhaps no account of the education of creative ability is more rewarding than that of the Alcotts. Ednah Cheney's edition of Louisa Alcott's *LIFE, LETTERS, AND JOURNALS*, Honore Wilsie Morrow's *THE FATHER OF LITTLE WOMEN*, and Sanborn and Harris's *A. BRONSON ALCOTT, HIS LIFE AND PHILOSOPHY* are rich in suggestion to teachers who wish to encourage creative writing.

The rich home life of the Alcotts is familiar to all readers of Louisa's books. Harassed for years by poverty, Bronson and his wife Abba May Alcott were yet able to give their children a childhood so happy that it has stood as an ideal to Americans for three generations. With all the dutiful nineteenth century respect for parents, there was no fear, nor even timidity in the relations of the little Alcotts and their elders. Indeed, the girls were far from the "seen but not heard" admonition of that time. An amusing instance of this is given in Louisa's *LIFE, LETTERS AND JOURNALS*. Margaret Fuller, calling on the Alcotts one afternoon, expressed the desire to see the "model children." As she was leaving, the children came shouting around the corner of the house. Baby May (Amy, in *LITTLE WOMEN*) was riding in a wheelbarrow in the role of queen, Louisa, "bitted and bridled" was the horse, Anna (Meg) the driver, and Beth, the dog. "Here are my model children, Miss Fuller," exclaimed Mrs. Alcott, waving her hand toward the excited, noisy group.

Nor was the ailing, sickly child who furnished the subject for the sentimental

poetry of the period (see Mr. Roller's paper on Lydia H. Sigourney, page 233) to be found among the Alcotts. The girls were encouraged to romp through the woods and fields about Concord. Louisa's early journals are full of references to the out-of-doors. "We played in the snow before school." "Had a splendid run, and got a box of cones to burn." "I had an early run in the woods before the dew was off the grass. The moss was like velvet, and as I ran under the arches of yellow and red leaves, I sang for joy."

The girls' lively imaginations were further stimulated by home theatricals. (See page 230). Louisa was especially fond of Dickens, and she and her elder sister, Anna, used to play Sairy Gamp and Betsy Prigg to the great delight of their audiences. A household of this sort would, of course, enjoy books, and while Mrs. Alcott and the girls sewed, one of them would read aloud. Scott, Dickens, Cooper, Hawthorne, Shakespeare, and George Sand's *CONSUELO* were among the volumes they enjoyed. Louisa was very fond of *PILGRIM'S PROGRESS*, also.

Except for a few weeks at the district school in the town of Harvard, and for a brief period with Mr. Lane (associated with Mr. Alcott in the Fruitlands enterprise) and with Miss Ford, a governess, Bronson Alcott directed the girls' education. Hampered by lack of subject material, he set lessons for his pupils without the aid of text-books. Examples of his assignments may be found in Louisa's *LIFE, LETTERS AND JOURNALS*. Each of the girls kept a journal—a most valuable training in writing.

Confidence, rich experience, abundant activity, scope for the imagination, and above all, sympathy with all their efforts—this was the training that Amos Bronson Alcott and Abba May Alcott gave their Little Women—the best-loved family in American literature. Bronson Alcott in the rearing of his family anticipated the ideals of today in school and home life.

The National Council of Teachers of English

Twenty-second Annual Meeting

HOTEL PEABODY, MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

November 24-26, 1932

PROGRAM

THURSDAY AFTERNOON, NOVEMBER 24

*Meeting of the Board of Directors, 2:00 P. M.
Louis XVI Room*

THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 24

*Opening Session, 8:00 o'clock
Ball Room*

"The Old Order Changeth, Yielding Place to New."
Music—Chorus, Central High School

Address of Welcome—R. L. Jones, Superintendent
of Schools, Memphis

The National Survey of Secondary Education: Its
Implications for Teachers of English—Leonard
V. Koos, University of Chicago; Associate Di-
rector of the National Survey of Secondary Edu-
cation

The Integration of English Instruction and Radio
Broadcasting—Levering Tyson, Chairman of the
Advisory Council on Radio in Education, New
York

International Understanding and Cooperation —
Augustus O. Thomas, Secretary-General, World
Federation of Education Associations, Washing-
ton, D. C.

President's Address—The Social Responsibility of
Teachers of English in Contemporary American
Life—Stella S. Center, New York

FRIDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 25

*General Session, 9:30 o'clock
Ball Room*

"Where There Is No Vision, the People Perish"
Music—Glee Club, Whitehaven High School

Address of Welcome—Watkins Overton, Mayor of
Memphis

A Word of Greeting—Sue M. Powers, Superinten-
dent of the Schools of Shelby County

The Relationship of English to a Unified Secondary
School Curriculum—Burton P. Fowler, Head
Master, Tower Hill School, Wilmington, Dela-
ware; President of the Progressive Education As-
sociation

The English Supervisor's Opportunity for Educa-
tional Leadership—Rudolph D. Lindquist, Ohio
State University, Columbus

Needed Research in the Field of English—Percival
M. Symonds, Teachers College, Columbia Uni-
versity.

The Curriculum Commission: a Report of Progress
—W. Wilbur Hatfield, Chicago Normal College

CURRENT ENGLISH USAGE: a Memorial to Sterling
Andrus Leonard—H. D. Roberts, Harrison High
School, Harrison, New York.

FRIDAY NOON

Special Luncheon Meetings, 12:00 - 1:45 o'clock

Chairman: Florence E. Bamberger, The Johns Hop-
kins University, Baltimore, Elementary Commit-
tee, Georgian Room.

Southern Backgrounds in Stories for Children—
Rose B. Knox, author of GRAY CAPS, MISS
JIMMY DEAN, THE BOYS AND SALLY.

African Backgrounds — Janet Miller, author of
JUNGLES PREFERRED, SAMMY AND SILVER-
BAND

The Real Story of Evangeline—Rosamond Archi-
bald, Horton Academy, Wolfville, Nova Scotia,
Canada

Louisa M. Alcott Centennial Anniversary—C. C.
Certain, Teachers College, Detroit, Editor, THE
ELEMENTARY ENGLISH REVIEW

FRIDAY AFTERNOON, NOVEMBER 25

*Conferences on Special Subjects, 2:00 o'clock
Speech and Spoken English
Room 200*

Chairman: Elizabeth W. Baker, State Teachers Col-
lege, Fredericksburg, Virginia

Secretary: J. M. O'Neill, University of Michigan,
Ann Arbor (Program omitted because of lack of
space)

*Reading and Dramatics
Room 210*

Chairman: Thomas W. Gosling, Superintendent
of Public Schools, Akron, Ohio

Secretary: Ruth A. Barnes, Michigan State Normal
College, Ypsilanti

Boys and Girls Know What They Like—Helen
Ferris, Junior Literary Guild, New York

A Program of Reading to Develop International
Mindedness

Junior High School: Ruth A. Barnes, Michigan
State Normal College, Ypsilanti

Senior High School: Essie Chamberlain, Oak
Park and River Forest Township High School,
Oak Park, Illinois

The Place of Dramatics in a State Teachers College
—Harvey S. Hincks, State Teachers College,
Memphis

The Carolina Playmakers — Frederick H. Koch,
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Discussion Leaders: Ida T. Jacobs, Theodore Roosevelt High School, Des Moines; John H. George, Nicholas Blackwell, High School, Bartlett, Tennessee

Problems Concerning the College Undergraduate
Louis XVI Room

Chairman: Ernest Bernbaum, University of Illinois, Urbana

Secretary: R. C. Pooley, University of Wisconsin, Madison.

(Program omitted because of lack of space)

Reading in the Elementary School
Georgian Room

Chairman: Lucy Gage, George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville

Secretary: C. C. Certain, Detroit Teachers College, Detroit; Editor of THE ELEMENTARY ENGLISH REVIEW

Developing International Attitudes on the Elementary School Level through Reading—Eloise Ramsey, Detroit Teachers College

The South in Children's Literature—Rose B. Knox, author of southern stories for children.

What Is a Good Juvenile?—Bert Roller, George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville

Character-Building Through Literature — Sister Esther Marie, St. Agnes College, Memphis

Children's Foreign Literature—May Massee, formerly of the American Library Association

Conference on Journalism
Pompeian Room

Chairman: Merrill Bishop, Assistant Director of Education, San Antonio, Texas

Secretary: Annkay Tharp, South Side High School, Memphis

(Program omitted because of lack of space.)

Teachers College Problems
Room 209

Chairman: E. A. Cross State Teachers College, Greeley, Colorado

Secretary: Elizabeth Watkins, Bellevue Junior High School, Memphis

(Program omitted because of lack of space)

ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

4:15 o'clock
Georgian Room

FRIDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 25

Annual Dinner, 6:15 o'clock
Ball Room

Toastmaster: Edwin Mims, Vanderbilt University, Nashville

The Teaching of English in 1950 — Christian Gauss, Princeton University

The Amenities of Teaching English—L. W. Payne, University of Texas, Austin

Larger and Wider Loyalties—The Rt. Rev. Thomas F. Gailor, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee

The Contribution of the English Teacher to the International Viewpoint—Aurelia Henry Reinhardt, President of Mills College, California; Chairman of the Committee on International Relations, American Association of University Women

Soloist—Mr. C. L. Montgomery, Miss Hutchinson's School

SATURDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 26

Section Meetings, 9:30 o'clock
Junior High School Section
Room 209

Chairman: Angela Broening, Department of Research, Baltimore

Secretary: Ruth W. Gragg, Arlington, Tennessee
(Program omitted because of lack of space)

Senior High School Section
Room 210

Chairman: Marquis E. Shattuck, Director of Language Education, Detroit, Michigan

Secretary: Elizabeth Gardner, Central High School, Memphis

(Program omitted because of lack of space)

College Section
Room 200

Chairman: O. J. Campbell, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Secretary: Bert Roller, Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville

(Program omitted because of lack of space)

Joint Meeting, Elementary and Teachers College Sections
Georgian Room

Chairman: Charles S. Pendleton, Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville

Secretary: C. C. Certain, Detroit Teachers College; Editor of THE ELEMENTARY ENGLISH REVIEW

The New Philosophy of the Teaching of English—Roscoe E. Parker, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Ghosts of the Eighteenth Century in Twentieth-Century Textbooks—Robert C. Pooley, University of Wisconsin, Madison

Recent Studies in Elementary School English—Bess Goodykoontz, Department of Education, Washington, D. C.

Creative Work in English

In the Elementary Grades

Mary L. Leath, Supervisor, Memphis City Schools, Memphis

Olive Stevens, A. B. Hill School, Memphis

In the Junior High School

Nell Owen, Fairview Junior High School, Memphis

Discussion Leader: Robert D. Highfell, West Tennessee Teachers College, Memphis

SATURDAY NOON, NOVEMBER 26

Reception to Incoming Officers by Outgoing Officers
12:15 - 1:00 o'clock

Louis XVI Room

Music—Violin numbers, Humes High School

Luncheon and General Session, 1:00 o'clock
Ball Room

Chairman: Walter Barnes, New York University, New York

Speakers: How Did He Happen To Write It?—Karle Wilson Baker, Stephen F. Austin State Teachers College, Nacogdoches, Texas

How to Tell Good Books from Bad—Charles J. Finger, Fayetteville, Arkansas

Folklore of the Southwest—Charles H. Brough, ex-Governor of Arkansas, Little Rock, Arkansas.

Convention Notes

Please register immediately at the convention headquarters on the Mezzanine Floor. The registration fee is fifty cents, to be paid by all who attend the meetings, Council members as well as visitors. The payment of the fee admits to all the meetings.

At the first opportunity *deposit your railroad certificate*—also at headquarters. Every year some members discover on Saturday afternoon that their

tickets have not been validated, and have endless trouble. Attend to this detail and save yourself needless worry.

Visit the exhibits as early as you can. The theme of the exhibits is in key with the general plan of the meetings. You will find materials prepared by students and stimulating suggestions for better teaching.

Please buy your ticket for any luncheon or the Annual Dinner just as soon as you can. The hotel must know in advance the number that will be present. The tickets are on sale at headquarters for the Friday luncheons (\$1.00), the Annual Dinner (\$2.00), and the Saturday luncheon (\$1.00).

All meeting rooms are on the second floor.

Council Exhibit Rooms: Parlor B; 214; 215

Local Committee

Chairman: Imelda Stanton, Central High School

Committee Chairmen: Central Advisory Committee, R. L. Jones, Superintendent of Memphis Schools; Distinguished Guests, Sue Powers, Superintendent of Shelby County Schools; Membership, Annckay Tharp, South Side High School; Publicity, Raye Jaffe, Humes High School; Finance, Kathryn Farrow, Messick High School; Council Exhibit, Josephine Allensworth, Humes High School; Dinner, Luncheons, and Buffet Supper, Elizabeth Haszinger, Central High School; Mrs. E. W. Hale, Whitehaven, Tennessee, and Jaqueline Hall, Shelby County Home Demonstration Agent; Entertainment, Elizabeth Watkins, Bellevue Junior High School; Registration, Nell Owen, Fairview Junior School; Meeting Places, John George, Bartlett High School, Bartlett, Tennessee; Drive, Russell Johnson, Technical High School; Publishers' Exhibit, Jennie Allensworth, Humes High School; Colored Teachers Cooperation, Mary V. Little, South Side High School; State Committee, Charles S. Pendleton, Peabody College, Nashville, Tennessee.

LYDIA H. SIGOURNEY

(Continued from Page 244)

Brothers and sisters are a gift
Of mercy from the skies;
And may I always think of this
Whene'er they meet my eyes;

Be tender, good, and kind,
And love them in my heart,
Lest I should sigh with bitter grief
When we are called to part.

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CHRISTMAS SONG

Sing we songs of peace,
Good will on earth,
As angels sang that night
Of the Blessed Baby's birth!

Shepherds, wise men, kings,
Following the star,
Gifts and adoration
Bring Him from afar.

In the lowly manger
Cradled on her arm,
Mary, Mother, holds Him,
Tenderly and warm.

Love it is His pillow,
Worship is His bed
Light from God's own Heaven
Circles His sweet Head.

Chant we all the chorus
Bringing joy to men:
Hail the Little Jesus!
Christmas time again!

Elise A. Phinney, High School of Commerce, Detroit